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Geography, public administration and governance

Petr Dostál and Pieter Saey

- 1 Debates concerning reforms of local and regional government and territorial administration in the 1980s and 1990s resulted in many European countries in a political and academic agenda seeking change in systems of local and regional government and administration. Although their country can be considered as a real laboratory in this respect, Belgian geographers have shown little interest in these problems. Cardyn (1982) was a study on the 1976 consolidation of municipalities¹, radical geographers discussed the issue of the state reform (Van-dermotten *et al.*, 1990; Saey *et al.*, 1998)², and some geographers contributed to recent debates on the nature of regions, decision-making and subsidiarity in the related field of spatial planning³. The account of the administrative organization of Belgium in the National Committee's *Geografie van België* is – quite significantly – a mere chronicle (Denis, 1992). However, the pioneering work of the radical geographers and the research in the field of spatial planning seem to offer a springboard for trying to join the international academic debates and research, taking place, for example, in the IGU Commission on Geography and Public Administration. This Commission serves as a forum where, among other things, the relations between geography and the political issues of public administration and governance are explored. The 1998 Cambridge meeting was devoted to the most recent developments in theory and practice. The papers presented at this meeting focused attention on the challenges to what was once a clear and understood distinction between market, state and civil society. They emphasized new configurations, seeking to explain their significance through the elaboration of the themes of (i) partnership between levels of the state and between state and market, and (ii) enabling or facilitating local government. The increasingly competitive operating environment, the moves towards co-operative action, the nature of local democracy and governance were issues that emerged from the discussions. Research issues and themes suggested by the meeting were the nature of civil society, state level engagement with globalising forces, change in the way cities are governed, urban-rural contrasts in governance, co-evolution of local state and global economic

dynamics, changing borders in a borderless world and governance and the management of externalities (Welch, 1998).

- 2 One of the results of these debates and research is the not surprising conclusion that administrative reforms have been sought under pressures of societal and economic changes in the European countries concerned and increasingly also under impacts of internationalization and globalization tendencies (Smith, 1985; Bennett, 1989, 1992, 1993; Barlow, 1991; Johnston, 1990; Sharpe, 1993; King and Stoker, 1996). It is, however, interesting to observe that the basic issues on the general agenda did not change much. The agenda still involves the search for more appropriate structures and functioning of (i) local (municipal) and regional (provincial) self-government and/or (ii) local and regional tiers of deconcentrated central state administration. With Leemans (1970) and also recently with Bennett (1997) we have to recognize that mutually connected systems of territorial self-government and administration have in-built tendencies to become obsolete. The structure and functioning of the systems are continuously subject of discussions on the need for reform and require more or less continual reform (Dostál and Hampl, 1999). The achieved reforms appear to be across countries that are more variable than uniform and there are no signs that they are becoming more similar. Therefore it seems appropriate at an academic level to direct attention to a number of issues and principles that possibly can guide the on-going debates on governmental and administrative reform.
- 3 First, we point to the importance of the integral nature of territories and the necessarily complex tasks of multi-purpose local and regional self-governments through the examination of traditional principles, stressing democratization and rationalization. Second, we explain the nature of geographical structuralization to arrive at a particular conception of the region. Third, building on the first two sections, we indicate a number of contemporary tendencies, that raise the issue of governance.

Traditional principles and issues of government

Democratization and rationalization

- 4 At least since Mill's *Considerations on Representative Government* published in 1861, traditional conceptualizations concerning territorial government in democratizing countries were based on two major normative principles: (1) local (and regional) self-governmental institutions have to be part of any democratic regime in order to provide for participation and education of citizens in political decision-making and governing; and (2) wide ranging competencies of local (and regional) self-government based on a multi-functional package of tasks should guarantee the efficient and effective provision of services, as these local/regional authorities possess local/regional knowledge, articulate local/regional interests and have the ability to oversee local/regional affairs. This two-fold conceptualization gave politicians and scholars a comprehensive perspective of a hierarchy of relatively autonomous, multi-purpose governmental bodies that provide public services, have the capacity to raise local or regional taxes and are regulated democratically by elected representatives overseeing the functioning of full time professionals.
- 5 Dahl (1990) has given a contemporaneous reformulation of this normative base of democratization and rationalization. In pondering the complexity of relations between

goals of democratization and rationalization, he has provided four general criteria that have to be reconciled in any major reform of democratic local/regional government: (1) the principle of affected interests: every citizen who is affected by the decisions of a government should have the right to participate in that government (ibid., pp. 49-51); (2) the criterion of economy that curbs the former principle by emphasizing saving of time, scarce means and human effort (among other things, it implies the need for delineations of territorial domains within which the affected interest principle can be applied) (ibid., pp. 30ff);³ the criterion of competence: democratic authority must be professional and thus qualified by appropriate knowledge and skills (ibid., pp. 21ff); and (4) the criterion of personal choice, usually resulting in rational self-interest (one citizen cannot satisfactorily gain his/her own ends unless he/she allows others an opportunity to pursue their ends on an equal basis) (ibid., p. 9). At least two conclusions to be drawn from Dahl's message are clear. First, one-dimensional simplistic ideas about territorial democratic authorities and rational use of scarce means are bound to be wrong. Second, systems based on democracy-cum-administration are necessarily systems based on delegation-cum-delegation. Horizontally, there is delegation from democratic representatives to professional officers. Vertically, delegated authority entails hierarchies of competencies, control, scarce resources and thus of power (ibid., pp. 71-75).

- 6 These normative and traditional approaches dominated on-going debates on the need for reform in 1970s and 1980s. There were major concerns during these years with issues of rationalization having to do with social and economic and ecological interdependencies and pressures, and leading largely to scale enlargement of local and, often also of regional units of self-government and administration in order to cope with impacts of urbanization and suburbanization and new responsibilities for public services provision (Leemans, 1970; Sharpe, 1993). Later, the importance of internationalization and globalization impacts was taken into account (de Smidt, 1987, 1990; Barlow, 1993). There were also concerns with normative issues of democratization emerging time and again in the debates (Leemans, 1970; Sharpe, 1979; Bennett, 1989; Dostál and Hampl, 1999). Among these issues, integrality of multi-purpose political decision-making and territorial effectiveness of internalization of external effects within one jurisdiction deserve a more detailed examination.⁴

Integrality and territorial effectivity

Integrality of multi-purpose political decision-making

- 7 From Mill onwards the advocates of traditional conceptualization of multiple-purpose local/regional representative government have shared a common underlying understanding (Stoker, 1996). It is the principle of a sufficient integrality of political decision-making at each self-governmental tier. This principle warns against fragmentation of political decision-making necessarily resulting from functional or single-purpose-oriented solutions of decentralization of competencies in self-government and from splitting up scarce means in deconcentrated state administration. Furthermore, fragmentation of decision-making in local/regional democratic bodies and state agencies tends to compel actors to interact more along vertical lines with actors in the same policy sector at national level. Segmented, i.e. partial or one-sided, views of interests of one sector tend to get too much emphasis (Hägerstrand, 1976; Törnqvist, 1980). Only a

sufficiently wide range of competencies allows for coordination of public service provision and gives room for balancing competing priorities and checking the segmented power of organized partial interests (Dostál, 1984, pp. 29-35). From the viewpoint of democratization another point is to be emphasized in this context. The multi-purpose character and a sufficiently wide range of competencies of local/regional self-governments are needed for revealing and reconciling preferences and for stimulation of deliberative capacity at local and regional levels of the political system. Only a wide range of competencies can provide the decision-making capacity that is necessary for dealing with the increased uncertainty and integrality of many of the issues confronting nowadays local and regional areas.

Deconcentration and vertical and horizontal decentralization

- 8 Social and economic pressures for democratization and rationalization interact. The issue of integrality of self-governmental policy-making is linked up with the issue of territorial effectiveness of internalizing important external or spillover effects within appropriate territorial jurisdictions. There is, obviously, the recurrent problem of instituting administrative areas which can be geographically under-bounded or over-bounded for effective accommodation of various components of urban and regional societal and economic changes (Bennett, 1989, pp. 7-9).⁵ However, here we want to draw attention to another aspect of the issue of territorial effectiveness, namely the two-fold disaggregation of the notion of hierarchy (Dostál and Hampl, 1993).
- 9 First, there is the basic skeleton of every administrative system with its usual division into central, regional and local tiers. The specific societal feature of this division is its legitimate monopoly of control (or sanction and enforcement) of social and economic activities/actors within a given territory of the state (Smith, 1985). The public administration control can be based on deconcentrated tasks from the central government (i.e. administration in a narrow sense of the central state's field agencies) or on decentralized tasks, competencies and accompanying obligations of territorial self-governmental bodies. There is a fundamental difference between these two bases. Territorially deconcentrated agencies of the central state are representing sectors (i.e. ministries or departments) at regional and local levels, whereas decentralization of competencies towards the local/regional self-government is promoted in order to constitute a check to the power of the central state (Johnston, 1990, pp. 66) and also to provide an organizational mechanism able to deal with the geographical variations and heterogeneities in need and capacity that result from uneven territorial development (Dostál and Hampl, 1993, 1999).
- 10 Second, there are also hierarchical relations between, on the one hand, relatively integral/complex multi-purpose self-governmental bodies fulfilling a wide range of tasks such as municipalities, districts or provinces and, on the other hand, less integral/complex actors and bodies with partial and private tasks such as enterprises or citizens in their roles as owners of properties, consumers of services, polluters of environment and so on. Importantly, there is also an intermediary sort of autonomous actors and bodies such as tax-collector's offices, chambers of commerce or employment offices. These are single-purpose institutions operating in addition to the self-governmental authorities of integral administrative territories in order to perform specific functions.

- 11 In this way we can distinguish between vertical and horizontal decentralization. Vertical decentralization is the shifting of functions and competencies from a higher level of government to a lower level. Horizontal decentralization is taking place when functions and competencies are shifting from multi-purpose government to single-purpose functional bodies and sectors. A more extreme form of decentralization is externalization of functions and competencies from the systems of government and administration towards private sectors, i.e. privatization.

Territorial integration and interest formation

Geographical structuralization

- 12 In his deconstruction of the globalization rhetoric, Beauregard (1995, pp. 238-239) points to the use of a simplistic notion of spatial scales: 'One way [the notion] appears in the argument is as a geographic description of "nested" places. Here we understand, metaphorically, the local as appearing within the regional, the regional within the national, and the national within the global. We are asked in addition not to think of this nesting in a two-dimensional space but in a three-dimensional one in which "larger" spatial scales are also "higher" and thus dominant. Finally, each scale is often depicted as relatively stable in the sense that, say, the boundaries of a region endure across the short-run of the theoretical argument.' This might lead to a conception of territorial integration as being the result of increasing interdependence of coherent regions⁶ at different scale levels, which compose an expanding three-dimensional (i.e. hierarchical) tile pattern.
- 13 However, territorial integration is mostly realized through clustering and concentrations in the networks of relations between actors with different ranges of action (Saey, 1994, pp. 73-74). 'Once we focus our attention on the agents who literally make scale, ... [a] multitude of actors, each with different geographical interests and influence, create a multitude of spatial scales. Places become linked to each other through highly differentiated actors and not in any simple way. Highly differentiated places appear when numerous actors develop a multitude of complex spatial linkages to and from these places. Less differentiated places have few such actors. In fact, it is the mix of these actors, and the distribution of influence among them, that results in such places becoming regional, national, or international nodes in the world-system' (Beauregard, 1995, pp. 239). Moreover, 'actors simultaneously have interests at multiple spatial scales; that is, their activities spread out over different geographical fields. A transnational corporation involved in consumer electronics, for example, makes regional locational decisions as regards branch plants, secures capital on international financial markets, negotiates tax advantages with national bodies, and adjusts its strategic plan to institutional shareholders from various countries. Local actors concerned about the withdrawal of investment by this transnational corporation might utilize state plant-closing laws, explore pension implications as governed by national legislation, work with

union organizers and experts from around the country, and even hire transnational law firms to help them consider an employee buy-out' (ibid., pp. 240).

- 14 A two-fold notion of territory emerges:
1. the networked territory, a spatially fragmented complex of areas structured as a network (e.g. the complex territory composed of the locations of a car manufacturer and his subcontractors);
 2. the region-as-advocate-of-local-interests, a political-geographical construction that manifests itself in the representation of a common interest, presumably or allegedly shared by the inhabitants and other interested parties of the area concerned. States, provinces, municipalities are also regions in this sense.

Territorialized democracy, self-interest and identity

- 15 Building on the idea of a (self-)governmental unit as a region-as-advocate-of-local-interests, it can be claimed that democracy and also territorialized democracy in the form of local/regional self-government is an integral affair providing an indispensable coordinating framework for formations of partial and less complex interests and behaviour of other corporate actors and individual citizens (Dostál and Hampl, 1999).
- 16 With Scharf (1997, pp. 61-66) we make a distinction between (self-)interest and identity. Self-interest is describing the basic preference of actors for self-preservation, autonomy and growth. In the case of corporate actors such as enterprises, political parties, employment offices or provincial governments interest formation is based on a specific identity. Identities of corporate actors must be relatively stable over time in order to be effective and forming a necessarily predictable environment for mutual interaction and functioning. We argue that the great integrality and complexity of functioning of local/regional self-governmental units derives from the necessity to (re-)articulate by democratic procedures their identities. Given the heterogeneity of self-interests of citizens forming a local or a regional electorate, a territorial self-government will always have the crucial general task to balance and reconcile emerging formations of partial interests within territorial jurisdictions concerned. We also argue that the relative integrality and complexity of interest formation of a multi-purpose territorial self-government equally derives from increasing comprehensiveness of its coordinative function. Due to increasing inter-connectedness of economic, social, political and ecological processes in its territorial domain also its coordinative and balancing role becomes inevitably more complex.
- 17 Thus, the institutional (self-)interest of local/regional governments as corporate actors must be granted a special place in debates on current reforms. Organizational and self-government interests have different normative and strategic implications. This will become clear in our explanation of the contemporary challenges for the systems of self-government and administration in the next section.

Contemporary tendencies and issues of governance

Tendencies

- 18 Contemporary challenges relate in particular to (i) decreasing aspirations of the (welfare) state, (ii) simultaneity of decentralization and centralization tendencies in entire

hierarchies of self-government and administration, and (iii) flexible system capability at local and regional levels.

Decreasing aspirations of the (welfare) state

- 19 The post-war increasing aspirations of the welfare state have had important impacts on the structure and functioning of local/regional self-government and administration (Bennett, 1993). It is useful to distinguish four levels of aspirations of equalization that most of the West European welfare states instituted in their nationwide legislation (Goedhart, 1989; Dostál and Blazek, 1992, pp. 158-160). A first aspiration level concerned the aim to equalize local fiscal capacity. Taxation was increasingly more centralized in the hands of the central government enabling redistribution of a part of tax revenues towards poor regional and particularly local governments. A second aspiration level was reached when the principle of equalization of expenditure needs was accepted. This resulted in the acceptance of some more or less objective criteria of indicating interprovincial and intermunicipal needs. On the one hand, there came objective criteria for the distribution of general grants. On the other hand, new specific grants (mainly for education, social housing, provision for the poor, etc.) were introduced. A third level of aspiration of the central governments was reached when the principle of equalization of local and regional capacity to provide public services was accepted in the national legislation. Especially this third level of legislative aspiration resulted in the awarding of numerous specific grants and accompanying tasks to regional and in particular to local (municipal) governments. A fourth level of aspirations was reached when the postwar legislation on the redistributive mechanisms of the welfare state even resulted in equalization (standardization) of the services themselves. This highest level of aspiration of the central legislation has meant that the room for manoeuvre of local and also regional self-governments has been considerably limited. The provision of expensive social welfare services is a good example of this aspiration level of central legislators (Esping-Andersen, 1990).
- 20 In the perspective of necessary reforms, it is important to realize that the four levels of equalization in public sector provisions still are simultaneously present in contemporary systems of territorial administration. In the 1980s and 1990s, however, most of the central government have recognized the necessity to shift the emphasis back to the third or second level. For example, in the Netherlands and in some other countries, the following points have been emphasized: (i) the necessity to strengthen further the financial situation of the largest municipalities, (ii) the deregulation and lump-sum form of special grants reducing bureaucratic control of the ministries, and (iii) the search for possibilities to increase the role of local and regional taxes (Dostál and Blazek, 1992). This general tendency to reduce the aspiration levels in provision of public services allows for a certain decentralization of finances and taxation from the central government. It also allows for some relaxation of pressures on the local and regional governments to implement public service provision of the central state. Allegedly welfare state burdens became too heavy. One of major solutions pursued by central governments has been privatization of welfare state responsibilities (Clark, 1998). The increasing importance of the private sector at this field has inevitably selective impacts on provision of welfare services at local and regional levels emphasizing meritocratic principles at the cost of equalitarian ones (Dostál, 1984, pp. 17-19; Dostál and Hampl, 1992, pp. 199-201).

Simultaneous centralization and decentralization

- 21 These adaptations are linked up with issues of simultaneous decentralization and centralization tendencies in entire hierarchies of self-government and administration. Both tendencies are embedded in the principle of subsidiarity. The recent debate on this principle has been stimulated by the Treaty of Maastricht (1992). Article A specifies that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen. Especially local/regional governments attach great importance to this article. However, a more elaborate description of subsidiarity is found in article 3B, that is added to the Treaty of Rome: 'In areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the Community shall take action, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States and can therefore, by reason of the scale of effects of the proposed action, be better achieved by the Community'. Clearly, subsidiarity works upwards as well as downwards. Admittedly this description is biased by the power relations within the European Union and between the Union and the member states. But, as the Belgian example shows, this bias is also present when the principle is to be applied in the member states themselves. There too the application of the principle is part of a game of positioning within the political power stratification of central, regional,⁷ provincial and local government levels. Not unsurprisingly subsidiarity has become a catch-all notion, whose interpretation depends on the individual, the organization or the public authority who wants the implementation of the principle (Cabus and Saey, 2000)⁸.

Flexibility

- 22 The notion of flexibility belongs to the popular vocabulary of this time and possesses an important mobilizing value as regards efforts of local and regional authorities (Dostál, 1999). Flexibility is a future-oriented notion. Flexibility relates to the wish to keep open the present situation in the view of coming future situations. However it should be clear that the notion of flexibility (i) is an instrumental one – flexibility cannot be a goal of reforms, it can only been used as a tool –, and (ii) threatens – like the principle of subsidiarity – to become a catch-all notion. To attain a more specific definition we can start from the observation that flexibility seems to refer to a shift in the functioning of organizational systems along the following dimensions: (i) from uniformity to pluriformity, (ii) from permanency to variability, (iii) from rigidity towards readiness for action, or (iv) from detail towards general delineation. Thus flexibility refers to the capability of organizational systems to react fast on the varied developments in a rapidly changing environment, that is very difficult to comprehend (i.e. to forecast), and consequently, to control effectively. Scott (1987) claims that these insights are challenging the wide-spread assumption that some generally applicable organizational principles can be developed that can be suitable in all places and at all times. Accordingly, we seemingly have to accept the following three propositions: (i) there is no best general way to organize, (ii) any way of organizing is not equally effective and efficient, and (iii) the best way to organize always depends on the character of the environment to which the organization must be related given its tasks and ambitions or obligations. Those organizations whose internal features best match the circumstances of their environment will achieve the best adaptation as indicated by the organization's performance

(Minzberg, 1983, pp. 143ff). We may draw the conclusion that the popular view that flexibility must be understood as associated with tendencies to hasty ‘demolitions’ of existing institutional and organizational systems lacks its fundamental logic. Instead, the notion of flexibility appears to refer to the capability to react on unpredictable future developments by enlargement of management capacity by alternative new steering and decision-making rules (Dostál, 1999). Correspondingly, flexibility does not necessarily refer to changing existing organizational structures of territorial self-government and administration, but to adaptations of their functioning, and thus, to increasing flexibility of the ‘rules of the game’.

Governance

- 23 Bennett (1993, p. 303) has introduced a useful distinction stressing a two-fold flexible approach: ‘flexible decentralization to the most basic and smallest units where the demand for participation, legitimacy, representation and community identity can be met; and flexible aggregation of basic units into collectives, co-operatives and associations for which efficient sizes of administration can be achieved which allow internalization of externalities and technical-bureaucratic efficiency’. It appears that the latter ‘is the only means of maintaining an adaptable but stable financial and administrative structure. This leads to arguments for different mixes of co-ordination, agency arrangements, ‘associations’ of local administrative units and different mixes of public administration, public finance and private (market) responses’ (Bennett, 1997, p. 7). In this way flexible centralization and decentralization raise the question of governance.
- 24 There are two concepts of governance: (i) the representation and protection of citizens, permitting citizens to exercise democratic rights, and (ii) the self-organized networks that transcend the state, private and voluntary sectors (Welch, 1998). The second concept refers not only to formal institutions, but also to a ‘wide range of other actors, institutional and individual, private and voluntary and public sector, which are involved in regulation a local economy and society’ (Johnston and Pattie, 1996, p. 672).⁹ Three developments deserve attention:
 - 25 (1) The transformation of the central actor, the local/regional political system, into a strategic enabler, meaning ‘the truncation of its direct policy functions towards a supportive or service role, underpinning the operations of the new institutions of local governance’ (Imrie and Raco, 1999, p. 47).
 - 26 (2) The shift in political goals from the welfare policy of redistribution to a productivist reorganization of social policy, reflecting the shift from the Keynesian welfare state to the Schumpeterian workfare state.¹⁰
 - 27 (3) Changing possibilities for democratization and participation. On the one hand, governance can lead to ‘new opportunities for public participation through the variety and diversity of local political institutions, as well as a role for local authorities in supporting a range of service delivery and decision making platforms’ (Stoker, 1996, pp. 3-4). On the other hand, ‘[t]ime and again... research has shown that, partly as a result of skewed distributions of power and resources... [governance] experiments have degenerated into undemocratic and unaccountable networks serving highly particularistic or dominant local interests’ (Amin and Graham, 1997, p. 425). To adequately appreciate governance one should distinguish the political relation between government and citizen from the service providing relation. Gilsing (1994) shows that

local authorities try to enhance their political legitimacy by improving professional and client relations, thereby creating a democratic deficit. This danger always arises when horizontal fragmentation (Barlow, 1994) takes place, i.e. when functions of government are divided between various single-purpose authorities and agencies. The administrators of single-purpose bodies are inclined to function from the perspective of their one-sided (partial) identity and interest formation and are lacking the integral perspective of a multi-purpose self-governmental body. Thus, a multiplicity of special-single purpose corporate actors is confusing to citizens, lines of accountability are often hidden and decision-making tends to be concealed from democratic control. This applies a fortiori to networks in which the private and voluntary sector are participating.¹¹

- 28 Similar developments at the national and European level have been interpreted tentatively by the Forward Studies Unit of the European Commission as a shift from formal and substantive rationality, underpinning respectively the liberal state and the welfare state,¹² towards procedural rationality, consisting in the contextualisation of the production and the application of norms through a collective learning process (Lebessis and Paterson, 1997). According to the Forward Studies Unit, these developments 'mark a break with the position where representatives are democratically elected, formulate broad policies in legislative chambers and oversee their detailed implementation by bureaucratic government departments' (ibid., p. 18). The Unit notes 'a recognition that the entire regulatory chain must be opened up in a process which in its attempt to involve and engage the resources of all affected actors at all stages can have profound effect on both accountability and effectiveness' (ibid., p. 15). This working hypothesis of a tendency towards procedural rationality can lay the epistemological foundations of the view that coping with flexibility is not necessarily tantamount to a purely market-based approach to political problems, but whether it can produce the solution of the legitimacy problem remains to be seen.

Conclusion

- 29 Contemporary and future tendencies in territorial self-government and administration have to be assessed in a wider context of development of societal organization at all significant scale levels. Indeed, necessary reforms of territorial self-government and administration will always lag behind economic changes. Economic actors operating at intranational and supranational levels are forming a large plurality of subjects led by articulation of partial interests. They confront territorial self-government and administration with important pressures for change. The response seems to be a shift from hierarchical government to networked governance, entailing the risk that political legitimacy will exclusively be derived from increased efficiency. Therefore it is necessary to hold on to traditional principles and to emphasize the idea that democracy and also territorialized democracy in the form of local and regional multi-purpose self-government is an integral affair providing the indispensable coordinating framework for partial and less integral articulation of interests and behaviour of corporate actors and individual citizens. Change of structure and functioning of democracy always relates to new divisions of power in society. A basic issue in any calls for reforms is obviously the asynchronicity of economic changes with changes in (territorial) democracy (Bennett, 1997; Dostál and Hampl, 1999). It seems that this issue never can be avoided, but only reduced. We can contribute to this reduction by examining the relations between, on the

one hand, basic principles of government and public administration and, on the other hand, geographical structuralization and the role of public authorities, civil society and economy therein. The most important questions seem to be how to democratically control networks of governance, and whether increasing flexibility demands changes in the organizational structures of territorial self-government and administration or changes in their way of functioning. Additional reasons to study these questions are provided by (i) the challenges to the development of lagging regions, of declining industrial regions, and of rural areas, arising from the completion of the European internal market and from the harmonization of social and environmental standards throughout the European Union (Van der Wee, 1993), (ii) the widening gap between the requirements of sustainability and the reality of European politics (European Consultative Forum for Environment and Sustainable Development, 1999),¹³ (iii) the challenges to processes of democratization and economic liberalization in the post-communist part of Europe (Dostál, 1992; 1998), and (iv) the necessity of global governance (Cable, 1999).

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NOTES

1. The former 2,379 municipalities of Belgium were consolidated into the present 589 municipalities by the Act of 30-12-1975 (in Antwerp the Act became effective only in 1983).
2. Former discussions of the federalization process by Vandermotten were published in *Cahiers Marxistes* (Vandermotten, 1988a; 1988b).
3. For example, four of the five contributions to the special issue on 'new regionality' of *Planologisch Nieuws*, 1995 were written by geographers. Other examples are Martens, 1995 on decision-making and Cabus and Saey, 1999 on subsidiarity.
4. Other principles and issues of rationalization are hierarchical nesting of units, provision of public services, effective and efficient operation of organization and services, deconcentrated state agencies, adjustment to change through amalgamation of units; other principles and issues of democratization are hierarchical nesting of democratic authority, political control (free elections), accommodation of cultural or ethnic identities, multi-purpose self-government, accountability of elected bodies and of state administration, stimulation of citizen's influence and participation.
5. Recently, Bennett (1997, pp. 325-328) identified at least six areas of difficulty of achieving a true bounding solution of this issue.
6. 'A geographically identifiable spatial synthesis of physical, social, economic, cultural and political processes within a geographically bounded whole at a certain moment' (Cabus, 1996, p. 9).
7. In the Belgian case the level of the Flemish, Walloon and Brussels regions.
8. The principle of subsidiarity already has a long history. It was part of the Christian social doctrine at the end of the 19th C. and as such linked to an organic conception of society. The present discussion of subsidiarity finds its origin elsewhere, namely in the pressure exercised by the processes of globalization and regionalization (in the supra-national sense) on the existing governmental relations.
9. In this sense the concept can also be applied to the global level (see e.g. Cable, 1999). The extension of the partnership arrangements, involving the European Commission and the member

state, to regional and local actors (both public and private) by the 1988 reform of the European Community regional policy (Van der Wee, 1993) and the inter-regional partnerships of the RECITE-programme launched by the DG XVI of the Commission (Cooke, 1993) can be considered as a specific form of governance.

10. 'The Schumpeterian element refers to the idea that states should concentrate less on demand-side measures, such as full employment or a redistribution policy, should less try to preserve old industries but instead focus on the encouragement of promising activities, on the construction and management of a favourable investment climate (supporting 'creative destruction'). In other words, states should focus more on supply-side measures such as education, R&D, infrastructure, re-skilling processes, etc. Workfare refers to the greater responsibility of the individual ... both for success and for failure, e.g. policies encouraging, in several ways, the unemployed to make great efforts and to take initiatives in order to improve their chances on the labour market. So, the SWS stands for an important change of state responsibilities and for a different method of operation in order to achieve these aims' (Devos, 1999, p. 26).

11. For a clear example of institutional fitness, see Swyngedouw, 1991 and Swyngedouw and Bil, 1993.

12. 'The rationality underpinning the classical liberal state can be described as formal with the state providing a legal framework within the individuals could contract freely. The welfare state, by contrast, has been characterised by substantive rationality. Here the state has intervened in ever more areas of social life to correct the market failures of the liberal state, to guarantee minimum standards of living, to protect workers and consumers and so on. This intervention has proceeded on the basis that the organs of government have the cognitive and material resources and abilities to understand and resolve the problems of society – in other words, that public actors can define problems, determine their scope, formulate modes of action, implement them and achieve predicted desired results' (Lebessis and Paterson, 1997, p. 13).

13. According to the Forum, sustainable development within the European Union implies a revision of the institutional and procedural arrangements according to the concept of multilevel constitutionalism. It should be based on the capacities and role of the civil society as an essential element of self-regulation in the EU-multilevel system of governance (European Consultative Forum for Environment and Sustainable Development, 1999, p. 1).

ABSTRACTS

Attention is directed to a number of principles that possibly can guide the on-going debates on governmental and administrative reform. The most important principles are the integrality of political decision-making at each self-governmental tier and territorial effectiveness of internalization of external effects, in particular the way hierarchy can be disaggregated. As the concept of a region-as-advocate-of-local interests applies to states, provinces and municipalities, interest formation on the basis of identity of self-governmental units is different from interest formation of other corporate actors. The institutional self-interest of local/regional governments must be granted a special place in the debates, especially in view of contemporary challenges (decreasing aspirations of the welfare state, simultaneous decentralization and centralization, flexibility) and the response to these challenges (shift from hierarchical government to networked governance entailing the risk that political legitimacy will exclusively be derived

from increased efficiency; change of organizational structures versus change of ways of functioning).

De aandacht wordt gevestigd op een aantal principes die een mogelijke leidraad kunnen zijn bij de huidige discussies over bestuurskundige en administratieve hervormingen. De belangrijkste principes zijn de volledigheid of het integrerend karakter van de politieke besluitvorming op elk niveau van zelfbestuur en de territoriale doeltreffendheid van het internaliseren van externe effecten, in het bijzonder de manier waarop hiërarchie gedesaggregeerd kan worden. Aangezien het begrip van de streek-als-verdediger-van-lokale-belangen ook op staten, provincies en gemeenten van toepassing is, bestaat er een onderscheid tussen de belangenvorming op basis van identiteit bij zelfbesturende eenheden en deze belangenvorming bij andere organisaties en collectieve actoren. In de discussies moet het institutionele zelfbelang van lokale/regionale besturen een speciale plaats worden toegekend, vooral met het oog op de hedendaagse uitdagingen (de verminderende aspiraties van de welvaartstaat, gelijktijdige tendensen van centralisatie en decentralisatie, flexibiliteit) en de antwoorden op deze uitdagingen (accentverlegging van hiërarchisch bestuur naar genetwerkt governance, die het risico inhoudt dat de politieke legitimiteit nog enkel zou afgeleid worden uit toenemende efficiëntie; verandering van de structuren van de bestuurskundige en administratieve organisatie versus verandering in de wijze van functioneren).

INDEX

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motsclesnl territoriale administratie, democratisering, decentralisatie, volledigheid, subsidiariteit, geografische structurering

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